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ABSTRACT

Actions which superintendents can take to promote the improvement of K-12 public education are presented in this brochure. The brochure is one of a series which offers specific ways in which different interest groups can respond to the eight broad action recommendations proposed by the Education Commission of the States' Task Force on Education for Economic Growth in their report, "Action for Excellence." The following areas are covered by the recommendations: (1) educational improvement plans; (2) partnerships between states and communities; (3) educational resources; (4) teacher improvement and recognition; (5) the student's academic experiences; (6) educational quality assurance; (7) educational leadership and management; and (8) services to students who are unserved or underserved. (LC)

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ACTIONS
FOR
SUPERINTENDENTS

Task Force on Education for Economic Growth

Education Commission of the States

EA015937

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WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

The challenge facing leaders in every state of the union is to inspire a new generation of citizens to be even more productive and imaginative than the generations who made "American know-how" a standard of excellence around the world. Beyond inspiring them, leaders must **empower** them by providing an education system that fosters the necessary skills, imagination and commitment.

Unfortunately, report after report indicates that we have for too long ignored the obvious connection between a well educated work force and a productive, expanding economy. In addition, technological changes over the last two decades are outpacing the schools' capacity to address change. Skills we asked the schools to stress a few short years ago seem inadequate today. And as the demand for highly trained people has risen, the achievement of students — especially in high-demand skills such as analysis or problem-solving — has been declining.

Americans have every right to be proud of an education system like no other in its commitment to serve *all* citizens, not just a privileged few. Today many exemplary schools, colleges and universities are graduating students who are as well prepared as any in the world to face the challenges of the future. But our schools must be strengthened, if they are to do what they alone can do: bring about an American renaissance.

We are challenged to act now, each in our own way, to:

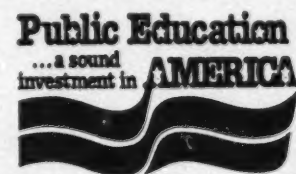
- Establish clear, compelling and widely agreed upon goals and priorities for improving education
- Upgrade our expectations for children and the skills required to meet those expectations
- Collaborate as never before — educators, governors, legislators, business and labor leaders and citizens — to strengthen the schools
- Educate *all* students in the skills essential to economic productivity and to the high quality of life a strong, growing economy can provide.

WHAT IS THE RESPONSE?

In December 1982, the Education Commission of the States established a national Task Force on Education for Economic Growth under the leadership of Governor James B. Hunt, Jr. Forty-one distinguished national leaders set these goals for the Task Force:

- Create national understanding of the need for a well educated work force and of the changing skills essential to economic growth
- Promote policies, programs and actions that national, state and local leaders can use to improve education
- Establish partnerships among leaders in communities, business, labor, government and education to improve education in ways that lead to economic growth and a higher quality of life for all Americans.

The Task Force has published *Action for Excellence*, a report on the condition of education today and a series of recommendations for leaders throughout the country. The Task Force's eight major recommendations appear below. Following each are some steps leaders can take to reaffirm a national commitment to our children and our economy.



WHAT ACTIONS CAN SUPERINTENDENTS TAKE?

Education organizations have suggested specific ways schools might use the findings of recent studies to improve education. Many of the actions described here are ones that superintendents are already taking; others may be new to some superintendents. As community leaders, superintendents might incorporate some of the following suggestions into school improvement plans, tailoring district programs to meet local needs.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 1

Develop — and put into effect as promptly as possible — plans for improving education in the public schools from kindergarten through grade 12.

■ Consider bringing together a coalition of local leaders in business, labor, government, education and the public to develop a plan for education and economic growth. The plan should:

— Endorse the vital role education plays in the economic future of your community and state and in preparing people for jobs

— Specify the skills needed for employment and citizenship

— Set specific goals for educational improvement

— Suggest ways technology might be used to improve education

— Establish timetables for achieving results and methods for measuring progress.

■ Assure policy and budget support that will make school improvement possible by working with your board and community.

■ Work with the governor, state legislators, state and local education leaders to form a state Task Force on Education for Economic Growth to carry on the national task force mission.

■ Consider these communication strategies:

— Meet with the news media and citizens to discuss the progress and needs of education

— Suggest actions groups should take to support their schools. Show the benefits for each of these groups in having an outstanding school system in the community

— Communicate regularly about the progress of your improvement efforts.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 2

Create broader and more effective partnerships for improving education in the states and communities of the nation.

■ Partnerships can be a key to excellence; therefore, promote collaboration among educators, government, business and industry, and the public within local communities:

— Promote business/industry programs leading to shared staff, loaned personnel, training opportunities for educational staff and team teaching within the schools

— Work with business and industry leaders to design training programs for teachers and administrators and help schools streamline administrative procedures.

— Establish formal and informal contacts with local, state and national associations, parents' and citizens' groups and meet with them on a regular basis

— Work with your governor, state legislators, leaders in higher education and representatives of elementary and secondary schools to create regional programs such as teacher training or others which expand the offerings of local districts

— Develop local job market projections and upgrade curricula based on the projections

— Identify skill requirements in concert with local employers

— Sequence work study programs with classroom study.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 3

Marshal the resources which are essential for improving the public schools.

■ Work with your state legislators and other agencies to assure adequate funding for educational research, technical assistance, training and evaluation.

■ Assess equipment and facilities and develop plans to secure what is needed.

■ Fund curriculum development in areas that increase students' ability to participate in society — science, mathematics, computer literacy, economics, career development, foreign languages and global education.

■ Promote a positive attitude toward your school improvement plans by creating a theme such as "Public Education Is a Sound Investment."

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 4

Express a new and higher regard for teachers and for the profession of teaching.

- Join state leaders, institutions of higher education and private funding sources in their efforts to provide scholarships and forgiveness loans to recruit highly qualified teachers.
- Support more effective training for teachers including summer institutes or business/education exchange programs.
- Improve inservice training to upgrade teachers' knowledge of new methods and techniques.
- Retain outstanding teachers by making possible professional advancement and appropriate rewards.
- Identify "examples of excellence" in your schools and recognize progress being made.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 5

Make the academic experience more intense and more productive.

- Build support for policies, training and budgets that will increase academic learning time.
- Establish a strong team of educators to study how curriculum content and sequence can be strengthened and modernized.
- Identify clearly the skills that schools are expected to impart to students for effective employment and citizenship.
- Encourage student progress beyond the basics and in areas essential to economic growth.
- Enlist parent support to establish firm, explicit requirements concerning discipline, attendance and homework.

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ACTION RECOMMENDATION

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Provide quality assurance in education.

- Work with business and industry to develop evaluation measures for teachers and administrators.
- Be prepared to examine the procedures for selecting and retaining teachers.
- Support actions to strengthen certification requirements for teachers and administrators and modify requirements so people with special expertise can serve in the schools.
- Work with professional organizations, teacher/administrator training institutions and training staff to provide quality, sequential programs of inservice training.
- Require teachers and administrators to continue their education and training to ensure that their knowledge and skills are adequate for the job.
- Assure high school graduation requirements that include adequate coverage of academic subjects particularly in areas such as mathematics, science, computer literacy and foreign languages. If requirements are raised, make sure that equity concerns are not abandoned.

Establish or review programs which monitor student progress through periodic testing of achievement and specific skills.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION

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Improve leadership and management in the schools.

- Work with deans of administrator training institutions to discuss ways of improving administrator education including effective management techniques.
- Promote programs allowing principals to devote most of their attention to improving classroom instruction.
- To the extent possible, tie principals' salaries to their responsibilities and effectiveness.
- Make possible inservice training for all school administrators.
- Ensure staff coordination by using management techniques such as team or matrix management and projects that involve the entire school system.
- Communicate with state higher education leaders to identify common problems, possibilities of collaboration and sharing of resources.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 8

Serve better those students who are now unserved or underserved.

- Provide incentives for the participation of women, minority and handicapped students in courses where they are now underrepresented.
- Evaluate programs for students with special needs to ensure that they receive a strong foundation in their early school years.
- Encourage programs that challenge academically gifted students.
- Support the broad and equitable distribution of educational resources so that no child is denied the possibility of becoming a productive member of society.

Although the above Task Force recommendations are generally consistent with the AASA policy, AASA has not formally endorsed them.

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

The Task Force will continue to be active, promoting efforts to improve K-12 education and developing products that governors and other concerned groups can use to improve education for economic growth. For more information, contact:

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